Congress of the United States Washington, DC 20515

December 18, 2013

1248

Federal Communications Commission 445 12th Street, SW Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler, Commissioner Clyburn, Commissioner O'Rielly, Commissioner Rosenworcel, and Commissioner Pai:

As Members of Congress concerned with improving our education system and preparing students for the jobs of the future, we are writing to urge swift action to improve and modernize the E-rate program in order to help connect our nation's schools with high-speed broadband over the next five years. This critical update will ensure every school has the ability to accelerate next-generation education reforms, support teachers, and enhance student learning. We believe this is an important step we can take to provide our children with high-quality digital learning opportunities in order to improve student outcomes and prepare them to succeed in a 21st century economy.

Improving our children's ability to take advantage of learning technologies has always been a bipartisan endeavor, as has been the E-rate program itself. We are proud to support the bipartisan recommendations to update E-rate and we call for those across the education, government, and business communities to recognize the opportunity we have to improve and modernize our schools. Therefore, we ask the Commission for swift action to bring high-speed broadband to our students on an expedited basis.

Closing the education gap means ensuring that our schools and libraries have access to digital learning opportunities that require high-speed broadband. However, too many of our children are currently trying to learn skills for tomorrow with outdated infrastructure from the past. While the E-rate program was enormously successful in bringing basic telephone and broadband to schools and classrooms, the connectivity provided is no longer sufficient. The average American school has about the same bandwidth as the average American home, but with 200 times as many users. Therefore, 72% of our schools do not have the Internet infrastructure they need to take advantage of digital learning opportunities today, and fewer than 1% have the infrastructure they will need in the future.

In an age when high-speed broadband is transforming almost every aspect of our lives, we must extend digital opportunities to every classroom. This is particularly crucial in rural areas, where students are less likely to have the speeds and infrastructure they need to take advantage of new technologies and high-quality educational content. Forty million of our nation's students—the next generation of talent in the United States—are being left behind without the speeds they need to succeed. As Commissioner Ajit Pai has noted, "Today, too many kids walk off the school bus, only to walk decades into the past. This is unacceptable. ... Parents are right to expect that schools will help prepare their children for the America of tomorrow, and they know that can't happen in the classroom of yesterday."

Experts agree that to enable students to take full advantage of digital learning, America's schools should aim for 100 Mbps of bandwidth or more for every 1,000 students and staff members today, and 1 Gbps by 2017. In today's global economy, these high speeds aren't just an educational imperative, but a competitive necessity. Test results released this month show that American students still lag far behind countries like China, South Korea, Japan, Switzerland, and the Netherlands in math, reading, and science. It's no longer enough just to compete for jobs; we have to compete for higher educational outcomes enabled by higher broadband speeds.

This means we need to: (1) Focus E-rate on broadband connectivity and infrastructure to ensure that we maximize the impact of the program on learning by limiting support for yesterday's outdated dial-up era technologies; (2) Create an upgrade fund within the E-rate program to connect every school and library, particularly those in rural areas, to high-speed broadband; (3) Increase transparency and accountability for the program in order to reduce costs, research effective practices, and ensure that all students have access to the connectivity they need; and (4) Simplify and streamline onerous paperwork requirements to improve program efficiency. These reforms will make possible strategic investments to deploy high-speed broadband to schools and classrooms across the country.

We simply cannot prepare our kids to compete for 21st century jobs by leaving them stranded with age-old technologies. Therefore, we ask you to support swift action to modernize and expand the E-rate program to bring transformative learning opportunities to every school in America.

Sincerely,

Jared Polis

Member of Congress

Jared Huffman

Member of Congress

Chris Gibson

Member of Congress

Suzan DelBene

Member of Congress

Don Young

Member of Congress

Tony Cárdenas

Member of Congress

Wette O. Clarke

Wette Clarke

Member of Congress

John Delaney Member of Congress

Richard L. Hanna Member of Congress

Rubén Hinojosa Member of Congress

Henry "Hank" Johnson, Jr. Member of Congress

Adam Kinzinger Member of Congress

Barbara Lee Member of Congress Lusan C. Lavis
Susan Davis

Haula

Susan Davis Member of Congress

Marcia L. Fudge Member of Congress

Denny Heok Member of Congress

Mike Honda Member of Congress

Derek Kilmer Member of Congress

Rick Larsen Member of Congress

Jerry McNerney Member of Congress George Miller

Member of Congress

Member of Congress

Chellie Pingree Member of Congress Carol Shear Poars Carol Shea-Porter Member of Congress

Eric Swalwell Member of Congress

Frederica S. Wilson Member of Congress



April 11, 2014

The Honorable Tony Cárdenas U.S. House of Representatives 1508 Longworth House Office Building Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Cárdenas:

Thank you for your letter regarding modernization of the Commission's rules governing the Schools and Libraries universal service support mechanism – also known as the E-rate program. I particularly appreciate your constructive support for ensuring that the E-rate program is well positioned into the future.

Modernization of the E-rate program is among the most important tasks currently facing the Commission. As you point out in your letter, it is critical to America's future to ensure that our schools and libraries have affordable access to modern high-capacity broadband technologies. I am a strong advocate for and believe in the E-rate program, and the need to modernize its operation to emphasize high-speed broadband. I have attached two recent speeches on the topic.

Commission staff is reviewing the record that has been developed in response to the July 2013 *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking*, and meeting with stakeholders to ensure that we have robust input from all interested parties. Just a few weeks ago, the staff released a *Public Notice* seeking focused comment on a handful of specific issues that have been raised by commenters. And my goal is for the Commission to adopt an Order later this spring that would implement fundamental structural and administrative changes, the results of which would go into effect in 2015. We need to ensure that the E-rate program supports the high-capacity broadband needed to give our students access to twenty-first century educational opportunities, while simultaneously improving the efficiency and administration of the program and establishing explicit program goals and measurements. We will include your letter in the record of the proceeding for Commission consideration as we proceed with reform of this important program.

I appreciate your interest in this matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

Tom Wheeler



April 11, 2014

The Honorable Yvette Clarke U.S. House of Representatives 2351 Rayburn House Office Building Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman Clarke:

Thank you for your letter regarding modernization of the Commission's rules governing the Schools and Libraries universal service support mechanism – also known as the E-rate program. I particularly appreciate your constructive support for ensuring that the E-rate program is well positioned into the future.

Modernization of the E-rate program is among the most important tasks currently facing the Commission. As you point out in your letter, it is critical to America's future to ensure that our schools and libraries have affordable access to modern high-capacity broadband technologies. I am a strong advocate for and believe in the E-rate program, and the need to modernize its operation to emphasize high-speed broadband. I have attached two recent speeches on the topic.

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Tom Wheeler



April 11, 2014

The Honorable Susan Davis U.S. House of Representatives 1526 Longworth House Office Building Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman Davis:

Thank you for your letter regarding modernization of the Commission's rules governing the Schools and Libraries universal service support mechanism – also known as the E-rate program. I particularly appreciate your constructive support for ensuring that the E-rate program is well positioned into the future.

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April 11, 2014

The Honorable John Delaney U.S. House of Representatives 1632 Longworth House Office Building Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Delaney:

Thank you for your letter regarding modernization of the Commission's rules governing the Schools and Libraries universal service support mechanism – also known as the E-rate program. I particularly appreciate your constructive support for ensuring that the E-rate program is well positioned into the future.

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Sincerely,

Tom Wheeler



April 11, 2014

The Honorable Suzan Delbene U.S. House of Representatives 318 Cannon House Office Building Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman Delbene:

Thank you for your letter regarding modernization of the Commission's rules governing the Schools and Libraries universal service support mechanism – also known as the E-rate program. I particularly appreciate your constructive support for ensuring that the E-rate program is well positioned into the future.

Modernization of the E-rate program is among the most important tasks currently facing the Commission. As you point out in your letter, it is critical to America's future to ensure that our schools and libraries have affordable access to modern high-capacity broadband technologies. I am a strong advocate for and believe in the E-rate program, and the need to modernize its operation to emphasize high-speed broadband. I have attached two recent speeches on the topic.

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Tom Wheeler



April 11, 2014

The Honorable Marcia Fudge U.S. House of Representatives 2344 Rayburn House Office Building Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman Fudge:

Thank you for your letter regarding modernization of the Commission's rules governing the Schools and Libraries universal service support mechanism – also known as the E-rate program. I particularly appreciate your constructive support for ensuring that the E-rate program is well positioned into the future.

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April 11, 2014

The Honorable Chris Gibson
U.S. House of Representatives
1708 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Gibson:

Thank you for your letter regarding modernization of the Commission's rules governing the Schools and Libraries universal service support mechanism – also known as the E-rate program. I particularly appreciate your constructive support for ensuring that the E-rate program is well positioned into the future.

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Tom Wheeler



April 11, 2014

The Honorable Richard Hanna U.S. House of Representatives 319 Cannon House Office Building Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Hanna:

Thank you for your letter regarding modernization of the Commission's rules governing the Schools and Libraries universal service support mechanism – also known as the E-rate program. I particularly appreciate your constructive support for ensuring that the E-rate program is well positioned into the future.

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Tom Wheeler



April 11, 2014

The Honorable Denny Heck U.S. House of Representatives 425 Cannon House Office Building Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Heck:

Thank you for your letter regarding modernization of the Commission's rules governing the Schools and Libraries universal service support mechanism – also known as the E-rate program. I particularly appreciate your constructive support for ensuring that the E-rate program is well positioned into the future.

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April 11, 2014

The Honorable Rubén Hinojosa U.S. House of Representatives 2262 Rayburn House Office Building Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Hinojosa:

Thank you for your letter regarding modernization of the Commission's rules governing the Schools and Libraries universal service support mechanism – also known as the E-rate program. I particularly appreciate your constructive support for ensuring that the E-rate program is well positioned into the future.

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April 11, 2014

The Honorable Michael Honda U.S. House of Representatives 1713 Longworth House Office Building Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Honda:

Thank you for your letter regarding modernization of the Commission's rules governing the Schools and Libraries universal service support mechanism – also known as the E-rate program. I particularly appreciate your constructive support for ensuring that the E-rate program is well positioned into the future.

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